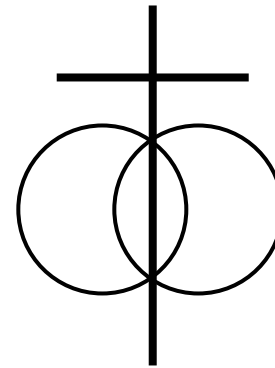


**Preparing for  
the celebration of**

*The Sacrament  
of Matrimony*



**St. Ann  
Parish Guidelines**

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## WELCOME

Dear Engaged Couple,

St. Ann Church joins with you in preparing for the celebration of your “Marriage in the Lord”. We are happy to walk with you during this special time. This period of time provides you with an opportunity to deepen your relationship with the Lord as an individual and as a couple. It is a time to discern if the person you wish to marry will lead you closer to your God – the source of all love. We will help you during this time of discernment by addressing some of the spiritual issues in your life together. We will also help you in your preparation for your wedding celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Your full and active participation in this celebration will bring you to a profound experience of Jesus Christ. During this time of preparation, we will also give you some practical aides to assist you with the marital partnership that you will share for life.

This partnership that both of you will choose to enter on your wedding day will require a commitment to love that is permanent and faithful. This commitment will require a self giving and selfless love from each of you. It will challenge you to always keep your hearts open to the gift of life. This covenant of selfless love will be the hardest thing that you will have to do in your life together. It will constantly call you to die to your own personal wants and place the needs of the other above your own. Therefore it will demand from both of you a greater maturity and willingness to engage in ongoing personal growth. This selfless love will also challenge you to open your hearts in greater faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. For without Jesus Christ, the daily giving of selfless love becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible.

## CHECKLIST

- Complete Marriage Information Worksheet
- Meet with priest for initial meeting/date approval
- Meet with priest for PMI
- Register for Pre-Cana  
<http://www.bridgportdiocese.com/familylife.shtml>
- Attend Pre-Cana
- Choose readings
- Choose music
- Contract with organist and cantor and other musicians
- Obtain copies of Baptismal Certificates
- Obtain dates of other sacraments
- Pray for one another daily
- Choose readers/lectors (1<sup>st</sup> Reading, 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, Prayer of the Faithful)
- Decide if you will choose family/friends to serve as extraordinary Ministers of Communion
- Confirm date of rehearsal with Parish Center

k. Costs:

1. If you are a supporting member of this community of faith, you do not have to pay a Church fee. A donation on your wedding day to St. Ann Church in gratitude to the Lord, however, would be greatly appreciated.
2. If you are a non-supporting member of this or the church you are registered in, the Church Fee will be \$400. This fee is to be paid before your wedding date is officially set. This fee is used to pay for the heat, air, light, and cleaning etc, of the Church. You may also wish to give a donation to St. Ann parish in gratitude to the Lord.
3. A donation to the celebrant of your marriage is greatly appreciated.
4. All couples are responsible for the cost of the following: musicians, cantor, soloist, servers, florists, decorations, and photographer.
5. Try to be as generous as possible, because you have been so blessed by God with the gift of each other's love.

The Church also believes that your sacred union as husband and wife is itself a sacrament of God's presence and unconditional love. As you love each other in the name of Christ Jesus, you reveal to one another and to others the face of God's love, forgiveness and healing.

On your wedding day, this covenant of love that you will make with one another in the Lord will enable you to receive from God the grace you need to give this selfless love to one another in a life long commitment. As a result, you can promise confidently on your wedding day that every day of your married life you will be able to choose to put the well being and happiness of your spouse ahead of your own. You will have the grace to choose to love your spouse during the four seasons of your relationship. These seasons are when you feel connected and in love with each other, when you feel disconnected and not in love with each other, when you are physically, emotionally or spiritually in pain and when you are physically, emotionally or spiritually in a good space. All during these times, you will always choose to love one another.

Let us help you to enter into this covenant of love with one another and with the Lord. The following guidelines are intended to help you during this time of engagement.

If there are any questions that we can answer or personal help that we can offer you during this time, please do not hesitate to call us.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Peter J. Towsley  
Pastor

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1. Who May Be Married At St. Ann?

- a. Catholics whose current residence is within the parish boundaries and who are registered members of St. Ann, as well as their children.
- b. Those Catholics living outside the parish boundaries who have been registered and active members of St. Ann for at least one year prior to making arrangements for the wedding.
- c. Those not registered in the parish and not practicing their Faith must discuss their reasons with the priest as to why they wish to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. We expect some commitment from them to practice their faith if they are to be married at St. Ann.
- d. Those registered in another parish must provide a letter from their pastor giving permission for the marriage to be held at St. Ann.

### 2. The Pre-Marital Investigation:

- a. An assigned priest will interview you regarding your freedom to marry in the Catholic Church. You will be asked to sign an affidavit in the Book of Intent (PMI) testifying that you are capable of entering into a Catholic Marriage. The four ends of a Catholic Marriage are: it is a permanent and faithful covenant open to the gift of life and for the good and well being of the spouse. If the assigned priest ascertains that the couple is unable to fulfill any of the four ends of a

6:15 p.m. or 7:15 p.m. For a Friday afternoon wedding, the rehearsal will be at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday. No more than one hour is allowed for the rehearsal. It is expected that wedding participants will be prompt so that the rehearsal can begin on time, especially since other rehearsals are often scheduled.

- i. Coordinating Weddings: If another wedding is scheduled on the same weekend as yours, you may wish to collaborate with others on flowers and decorations.
- j. Additional Notes and Rules:
  1. No children under the age of four may be in the wedding party.
  2. Please designate someone in advance of the wedding to remove all boxes, programs, etc. from the church immediately after the wedding. The florist should remove candelabras and aisle candles before the next scheduled service.
  3. No rice or rose petals may be thrown inside or outside the church.
  4. Alcoholic beverages are positively forbidden on the grounds or in the church building during the rehearsal or at the time of the wedding.
  5. We encourage you to use a cloth aisle runner when possible. Plastic runners are very slippery. Our aisle is 100 feet long.

- d. Music: Our parish Music Director must approve all music and songs for the wedding as well as musicians from outside the parish. All song music must be religious in nature and be reflective of the Christian faith. You are also expected to have a Cantor for your wedding celebration to lead the congregation in singing.
- e. Photography: Photographers are not to interrupt the service or be distracting. Only stationary video cameras are permitted, situated at the discretion of the celebrant. No electronic equipment can be visible in the sanctuary. The photographers are not to go into the sanctuary or stand in the middle aisle during the ceremony. They can use flash only during the processions.
- f. Decorations: It is strongly recommended that decorations of palms, flowers, ribbons or candles be simple and dignified in keeping with the religious nature of the ceremony. Seasonal decorations and banners in the church may not be removed for a wedding. This is especially true for the seasons of Advent and Christmas, as well as Lent and Easter.
- g. Candles: Candle wax can cause major cleanup problems. We urge you to have dripless candles and to have the florist place clear plastic underneath the candelabra as a precaution.

There is no need to purchase a unity candle from the florist. You will be encouraged to purchase a Christian Marriage candle for use during the service.

- h. Rehearsal: The wedding rehearsal is to be scheduled through the Parish Center at a time mutually agreeable to the celebrant and the engaged couple. The rehearsal will not be scheduled earlier than five months before the wedding to allow flexibility in scheduling other weddings. The rehearsal times on Friday night are

Catholic marriage, he may ask you to postpone your wedding plan until this has been rectified.

### 3. **Dispensations:**

- a. Dispensations are required for the marriage of a Catholic to a non-Catholic whether the non-Catholic is Christian or not. To receive a dispensation for marriage to a non-Catholic, the Catholic must pledge to do all she or he is capable of, while respecting the conscience of the partner, to ensure the Baptism and Catholic upbringing of children. No pledge is required of the non-Catholic.

### 4. **Records Required:**

- a. For Catholics: Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation records: The baptism record should be issued within 6 months from the Church of your baptism. This means that a certificate kept among family documents, possibly from the day of baptism itself, will not be sufficient. These records should be brought to the Marriage Seminar or the first meeting with your assigned parish priest. For Catholics, the Sacrament of Confirmation needs to be received. This sacrament completes your full initiation into the Catholic Church. If the Catholic party has not yet received this sacrament, they are encouraged to do so. It is not a requirement for marriage, but is highly recommended.
- b. For Non-Catholic Christians: A baptism record from the church of baptism. If you are unable to find your baptism record, you will have to have a witness give an affidavit that the baptism took place. There is no time limit placed on the baptismal certificate on the Non-Catholic Christian.

c. For Previous Marriage: If either of the parties have been married before, you must submit your previous marriage certificate, death certificate, divorce decree, and/or annulment paper. You also must give proof that you are meeting all of your obligations from your previous marriage, especially in relationship to your former spouse and any children born of that union. If you have been married before, you are not free to marry in the Catholic Church until an annulment has been obtained. A date cannot be set until an annulment has been obtained.

d. Marriage License:

1. Obtain a marriage license from the Town Clerk's office within 30 days of the date of your wedding. The marriage license must be issued by the City of Bridgeport (or the town/city where the marriage is going to take place). The bride and groom must go together to the Town Clerk's office with a driver's license or a passport. As of October 1, 2003 blood tests are no longer required.
2. The marriage license is to be presented to the priest on the night of the rehearsal. If there is not a license from the town in which the couple is to be married, the marriage cannot take place.

### 3. **Times of Weddings**

No more than two weddings will normally be scheduled on each Saturday. Wedding times on Saturday are between 10:00 A.M. and 1:30 P.M. You may have your wedding celebrated on Friday afternoon at 4:00 P.M. Exceptions to this schedule allowing your wedding to take place on another day will only be considered for pastoral reasons. Due to the busy weekend schedule of Eucharist, a Marriage Ceremony without Eucharist may be permitted at 4:00 P.M. on Sunday.

### 4. **Marriage Ceremony**

- a. As a general rule, a Catholic couple celebrates their marriage within the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Mass). If you have not been practicing your faith for a period of time, or have unofficially left the Catholic faith, it is advised that you have a wedding ceremony without a Eucharist. For inter-church marriages, it is suggested that the ceremony be held without a Eucharist.
- b. **Lectors**: You are strongly encouraged to select an experienced reader from among your relatives and friends to read the Scripture Lessons. You are encouraged to prepare the General Intercessions and lead the community in praying these Intercessions.
- c. **Eucharistic Ministers**: You may ask relatives and friends who are commissioned Eucharistic Ministers in any parish to serve as Ministers of Communion at your wedding. The priest will help you in determining how many you will need.

## THE PREPARATION PROCESS

### THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

#### 1. Celebrant

The normal celebrant of the wedding is the priest of the parish where the wedding is celebrated. After you attend the the Pre-Marriage Seminar you will be assigned one of the parish priests. The celebrant of the wedding directs the rehearsal and the ceremony according to the rituals of the church and local parish customs. He will advise you of the options and choices available to you. A wedding consultant is not allowed to have any functions in the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony .

A visiting priest or deacon may celebrate a wedding at St. Ann if he is properly qualified according to both civil and Church law. He must receive the proper delegation from the Pastor in order to witness your marriage. The parish priest is the one responsible for all marriage papers, dispensations and your participation in our preparation programs. If you are unable to fill out the marriage papers with the parish priest assigned to you, you must go to the parish of your residence to do the proper marriage papers. Without completing proper paper work, you will be unable to be married at St. Ann.

#### 2. The Place of Marriage:

- a. The wedding of two Catholics ordinarily takes place in the parish church of the bride or groom.
- b. In either an inter-church or interfaith marriage, the couple may celebrate their wedding in the place of worship of the other party when a pastoral reason exists.

#### I. PERIOD OF INVITATION

- a. Call the Parish Center and set an appointment time for an initial Pre-Marriage meeting with one of our priests (368-1607).
- b. Stop by the Parish Center to pick up the Pre-Marriage Guidelines and to complete the Marriage Information Worksheet (we can also email the worksheet to you). Read and discuss this information prior to attending the Pre-Marriage Seminar
- c. Attend the Pre-Marriage Meeting for an overview of the marriage preparation process. This session will also review the premarital guidelines.

#### II. PERIOD OF FORMATION

##### a. Remote Preparation:

Do these activities right after attending the Pre-Marriage Meeting:

1. Pray daily for your relationship and for your intended spouse.
2. Set aside time weekly for intentionally working on relational activities.
3. Write a monthly love letter.

4. Schedule time for personal reading about marriage and relationships.
5. Attend weekly Eucharist.

b. **Proximate Preparation:**

1. Attend the **Diocesan Pre-Cana Program** (register online at <http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com/familylife.shtml> ) or
2. Attend the Engaged Encounter Retreat.
3. Attend pre-marital counseling, if necessary.
4. Meet with Priest to discuss your progress in preparing for your marriage.

c. **Immediate Preparation:**

1. Meet with your priest to:
  - Sign the Book of Intent (PMI).
  - Prepare your wedding ceremony.
  - Set the date and time for your wedding rehearsal.

## CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

The heart of your wedding celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is a covenant or promise that you make between one another and God. It is primarily a religious event. It is an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ and what He wants to do for your relationship. This religious event celebrates your pledge and willingness to be a visible presence of Jesus Christ's love, forgiveness and healing to one another. It is a commitment to God to continue to root your love in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout your marital life. As His love becomes a greater part of your life together, you become the visible presence of Jesus Christ to the other person. You do not only receive the grace of the Sacrament to live this covenant of love for life, but also become a source of the Lord Jesus' love, forgiveness, and healing to one another.

This covenant will demand that you not only are baptized in the Lord, but that you are ready to make a personal commitment to open your hearts to the love, forgiveness, and healing of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Since your marriage celebration is a Sacrament of the Church, at least one party in the marriage needs to be a practicing Catholic.

Pope John Paul said, "inasmuch as it is a sacramental action of the Church, the liturgical celebration of marriage should involve the Christian community, with the full, active and responsible participation of all those present, according to the place and tasks of each individual: the bride and the bridegroom, the priest, the witnesses, the relatives, the friends, the other members of the faithful, all of them members of the assembly that manifests and lives the mystery of Christ and His Church."